

HOUSES OF THE WHITE ISLAND

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On clear Mediterranean nights, the white houses of the island of Ibiza have a unique phosphorescent presence about them. On the White Island, the lines and the forms of the ancestral houses stand for a whole theory of functionality. The peasant house consists of a series of modules arranged around a rectangular room which is at once hall and living-room. The house is adapted to the irregularities of the terrain, which is why the floors are of different heights. The arcade is typical of this architectural concept, which came into fashion in the sixties. 87 % of the island of Ibiza is taken up by properties with a surface area of between 5 and 100 hectares, and 77 % of the land is worked by its owners—who live on their own property—, far from the frenzy of the tourist coast. On

each property, the dwelling is a conglomerate of cubes, which adapt themselves to the needs and possibilities of each family, while at the same time—thanks to a deep-rooted sensibility—producing an undeniable beauty of form. Technical simplicity and economy of means have turned what is quite obviously a poor man's architectural style into a cubic symmetry which fascinated the theorists of functional modernity. The roofs of the houses of Ibiza are flat terraces, and the walls have few openings. Set amongst farmland and orange groves, the isolation of the domestic nucleus is, as in all traditional Mediterranean architecture, an absolute imperative.

The relationship between religious architecture and military architecture is another feature of the island of Ibiza. The

general defence scheme made it necessary to have churches situated at a series of strategic points. In the past, the towns of Ibiza grew up around the white-walled churches, each town taking the name of the parish saint. The church has two essential elements: on the one hand, the bell-tower, and on the other, the arcade, inherited from the Arab mosque, whose structure has been preserved in the churches of Ibiza. These churches, with their massive, almost windowless walls, look out over the landscape like watchtowers, each crowned with its steeple. Normally they have an arcade surrounding a stone courtyard. They were built by the peasants themselves, and preserve the same organic style that gave rise to the traditional Ibizan house, the house of white-washed cubes of the island of Ibiza. ●